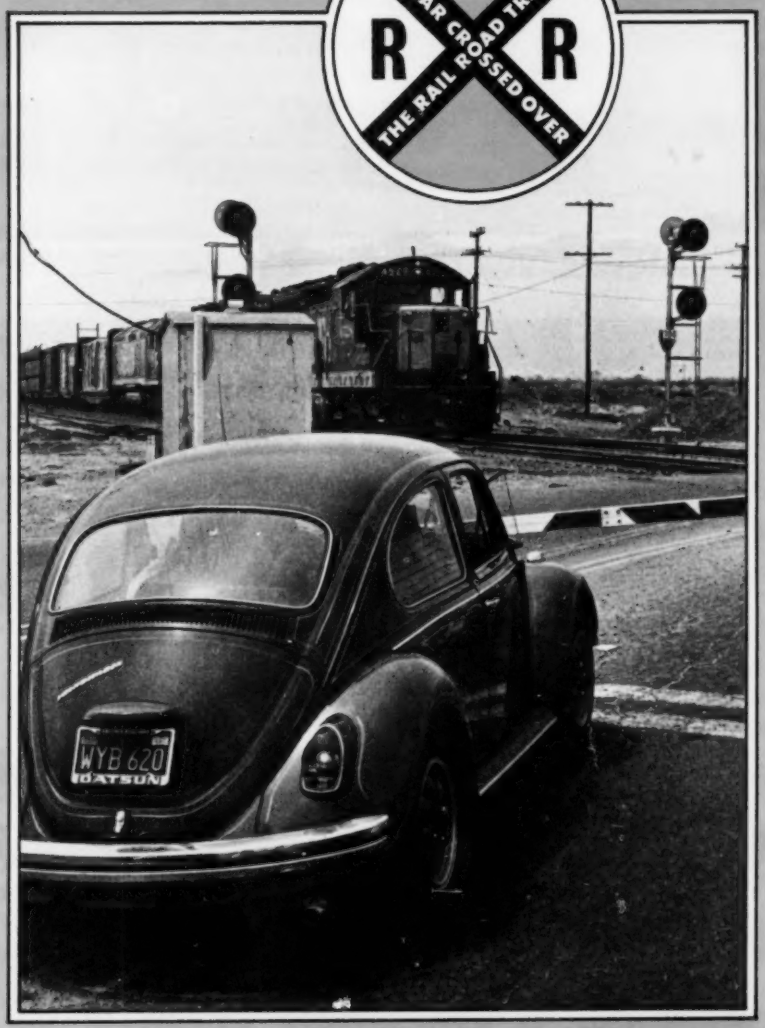
MAY 1982

TIGHT SPOTS

DRIVER



"the SAFETY BELT GAME"?

IN-TOWN DRIVING

You stay alert at all times while driving in the city. Therefore, you are not surprised by things like drivers opening their doors in front of you.

Speed limits are meant, among other things, to slow the motor traffic enough to allow pedestrians to move safely.

IN-TOWN DRIVING

Something you do every day is not so simple as it appears

You should congratulate yourself. You perform a difficult task regularly, and you do it well. It's called "city driving." It doesn't seem that hard to you because you do it every day without mishap. But driving in urban areas, whether it's driving to and from work in rush hour or just a trip to the supermarket, requires more agility and attention and skill than any other kind of driving.

It's a numbers game. In-town driving is more difficult because of all the other people around you. You have much more to do than you have on a rural road, or on a super-highway.

And so you should congratulate yourself. Even with all the different cars, movements, signals and signs you have to watch, you are rarely surprised by anything. Although the maneuvers of another driver may annoy you, you are not caught off guard by them. You somehow know he was planning to move into your lane, or to turn left in front of you, or whatever dumb thing he did.

You aren't surprised because you are constantly watching around you for the slightest hint of what is to come. You watch the signs and you look a block ahead to see what color the light will be when you get there. You watch the cars along the side of the street for any that will leave a parking place, or for any driver who will open his door.

Let's look at a few of the things that separate you — the safe driver — from the not-so-safe driver, as you motor around the city.

Lights: With the amount of traffic moving through the busiest urban intersections, a traffic light is the only kind of device that can efficiently control movement. The thing that confuses some people is the yellow or amber light. You know that the yellow light means "caution" or "prepare to stop." You approach intersections carefully, knowing that the green may change to yellow at any time. And you stop easily and smoothly as the yellow changes to red, rather than racing through the intersection.

To other drivers, yellow means "floor it." They accelerate to try to clear the intersection before the red light appears. They may cause collisions in the middle of intersections, or close calls, or just anger a few other drivers. (See "At the Crossroads," September 1981 DRIVER, for more on intersections.)

Patience in traffic: You should really congratulate yourself for your patience. Since you drive in the city you drive in heavy traffic at times. Whenever you can, you avoid the worst of it by simply not driving during the peak rush hours. But when you do drive, you remain in control of yourself as well as your car. You don't get angry when you can't move in a traffic jam and you don't say ill-mannered things to the other drivers. You realize that if there is nothing you can do about it to speed things up, the best thing to do is nothing. You relax but stay alert and watchful, and of course you get to your destination as quickly as anyone else.

The lousy driver doesn't get there any quicker, but he certainly tries. He accelerates quickly as a gap appears in traffic and then jumps on the brakes as he comes upon the bumper of the next car. Sometimes he rear-ends that next car. Worst of all, he gets angry and verbally loses his

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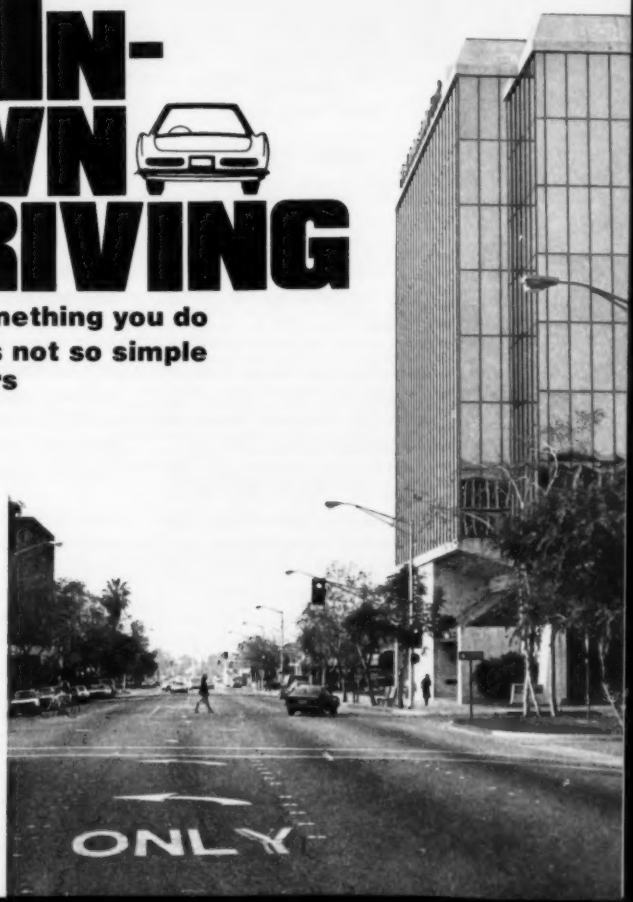

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FOR THE MILITARY DRIVER

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MAY

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 12

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THE EDITOR SPEAKS

DOUBLE CLUTCH

GOINGS-ON IN GOVERNMENT

A year ago, this column reported the possibility that government regulations covering the import of foreign cars not made for the American market would be changed. There was hope that the new rules would allow importing one exotic car per person without requiring modifications to meet all American standards.

The regulation change has been announced and we're sorry to say it isn't as good as many of our readers overseas were hoping for. Individuals are now allowed to import, one time only, for personal use and not for resale, vehicles five or more model years old without bringing the vehicle into compliance with U.S. emission standards. The safety standards, however, must still be met. This means you still must post bond equal to the value of the car until modifications are completed, and that modifications must be completed within 90 days or you must have the car destroyed or exported. Safety modifications can cost thousands of dollars.

President Reagan recently launched two national campagns — one to "buckle up" and the other to keep drunks from driving. He is getting enthusiastic support from manufacturers serving the auto industry. Watch for the Goodyear blimps sailing overhead this summer, trailing "buckle up" banners. And a mandatory-use seat belt law has been introduced in the Michigan legislature. General Motors is supporting that one in 140 publications that reach half a million GM workers and their families, and plans print media ads telling the public it is "socially acceptable and responsible" to wear belts.

in-town driving

continued

When entering traffic, you always insure there is a sufficient gap you can move into without interfering with other motorists.

temper at people who can't do any more about the situation than he can. He succeeds only in raising his blood pressure or giving himself indigestion.

Entering traffic: When trying to get onto a main street from a sidestreet or from a parking lot, you wait your turn and remember that fast-moving traffic is dangerous. When there are no signs or lights for the cross traffic, you do not bolt out in front of them, even if you have to wait for a long line of cars. You do not take foolish chances.

The poorer driver gets tired of waiting and moves. He seems to be challenging the others to hit him. Most often, of course, they will not hit him, but it is because of their quick application of the brakes, not because of his driving skill.

Right turn on red: A special maneuver you do correctly is the right turn on a red light (ROTR). This special law allows you to turn right without waiting for the green light, to keep the traffic moving. As a good driver, you always make a complete stop and a judgment on the safety of the turn. You always check before making the move, to see whether any sign prohibits it. If not, you check the cross traffic to your left. You make the turn only when there is sufficient space for the move, without interfering with the movement of other cars.

The less skillful driver continues to roll after he reaches the corner; he never fully stops. He takes a quick look at the traffic and moves even if they are getting close. He relies on the acceleration of his car to keep him out of a collision, instead of relying on good judgment.

Parking lots: Traffic in the shopping center or mall or any parking lot is like a miniature traffic jam. Cars move slowly and not very often. Your method of handling it is the best

continued

continued

one — move slowly, be patient and be very careful. You realize that impatience or anger will not get you to the exit any faster. You also know that cars move in so many directions in a mall parking lot that you often risk collisions. You always accelerate cautiously and are ready at all times to go for the brake pedal.

The impatient driver loses his cool quickly. He zips into any opening he finds and seems not to care if he gets in anyone's way. He gets angry. He drives across the parking lines, sometimes having near-misses with other drivers who are doing the same thing.

The lane change: When the time comes for a lane change, you are ready to go. You have already chosen the lane you want to move into. You have looked to see if there is a clear space with no other cars you will interfere with. You have set your car at the proper speed and allowed cars to go ahead if necessary. You have signaled to let them know your inten-

continued on page 20

(right, top)
A right turn on red can be a dangerous maneuver. You make a full stop and watch for cars close enough to present a hazard before you make the turn.

(right, bottom)
Signs can sometimes be confusing. You look ahead and plan your movements so the signs don't cause you any problems.

(below)
A minor traffic jam results when many cars have to go through the bottleneck of the base gate. You avoid the peak traffic times, but when you can't your patience makes it possible to arrive calm and ready for the day's work.

Experience has shown you that you must respect the intersection, a very dangerous spot in the city. You always wait until it is safe to make a turn.

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in and out of TIGHT SPOTS

Getting into a tight spot is no trick. Anybody can do that, including your kid brother the day after he gets his driver's license. Or *especially* him. The thing that sets you apart from your kid brother, and from those who damage themselves and their cars in traffic accidents, is your ability to get *out* of the tight spot.

You round a curve on a narrow two-lane highway doing 55 miles per hour and suddenly you see a car stopped ahead, half on and half off the roadway. There's a car coming from the opposite direction and not enough room for you to go between. There's an open gully on your right. What should you do?

a. Go on a diet.

b. Put your car on a diet.

c. Grasp the wheel firmly, hard brake, release brake and steer off the road into the gully.

d. Grasp the wheel firmly and hard brake.

The correct answer is c. There's no way you can stop in time, because at 55 mph you need at least 225 feet and you don't have it. Hitting the parked car will hurt and a head-on collision with the other car will be worse. The thought of driving into that gully may not be pleasant, but it's still better than the other two alternatives. If you have your seat-belt and shoulder harness on you won't bounce around or get thrown out of the car. Even if the car rolls you're better off, but you have a chance to get it off the highway and keep it on the wheels.

You're driving at 55 mph and you see a sheet of water covering the road ahead. What should you do?

a. Hard brake and release before hitting the water, hold wheel tightly and steer straight ahead.

b. Hard brake and turn left to avoid hitting the water.

c. Speed up and splash all the water off the road.

One very important factor is your experience. You've done a lot more driving than junior has and you have a better idea of what to do in an emergency. But there are many experiences you haven't had and don't know how to handle. Faced with an imminent head-on collision, for example, you might do the right thing to avoid it and you might not. The question is, do you wait for these things to happen and gain some more experience (and perhaps a few dents) or is there another way?

Trust DRIVER to offer another way. We've made up some particularly sticky situations that you can mentally put yourself into, at no risk to yourself or your favorite four-wheeled beast. Read them and try to find the best way out from among the choices we've listed.

We've thrown in some funnies along with the serious answers, but don't let that fool you. Although there will be no prize for the right answers and no penalty for the wrong answers, this quiz gives you valuable advice on getting yourself out of tight spots that could turn into accidents. Now, go for it.

If you're going fast enough on a wet road, your car will be supported by the water and you'll have no steering control. That's called hydroplaning. Changes of direction are dumb, as is braking. You must do your braking *before* you hit the water, attempting to slow down below the hydroplaning point, so choose a. Speeding up is crazy, and trying to brake and steer around the water could make you lose control entirely.

You're driving the legal speed limit on a freeway approaching your exit. There is traffic on your left and as you enter the off-ramp you see some dummy coming straight at you. The driver has made a mistake and is using the off-ramp for an on-ramp. It's too late to teach him to read or give him driving lessons — it's head-on collision time! Any ideas?

A. Honk your horn and scream at him.

b. Honk your horn, scream at him and cry a lot.

c. Honk, signal and ease left.

d. Honk, signal, hard brake and steer right onto the shoulder.

D is the right one. If you tried to "ease left," you might meet up with the freeway traffic that's still going 55, perhaps getting rear-ended or sideswiping another car. So go for the right shoulder on the ramp. But make sure that idiot in the other car knows where you're going or he might go for the same spot and set up the head-on collision again. Honk to get his attention, and signal to let him know what you're going to do.

continued

You're motoring happily along at 55 mph in the number 2 lane of a six-lane freeway, with cars on both sides of you. As you come around a curve in the highway, you see a mattress just 25 yards ahead in the center of your lane. How do you get out of this one?

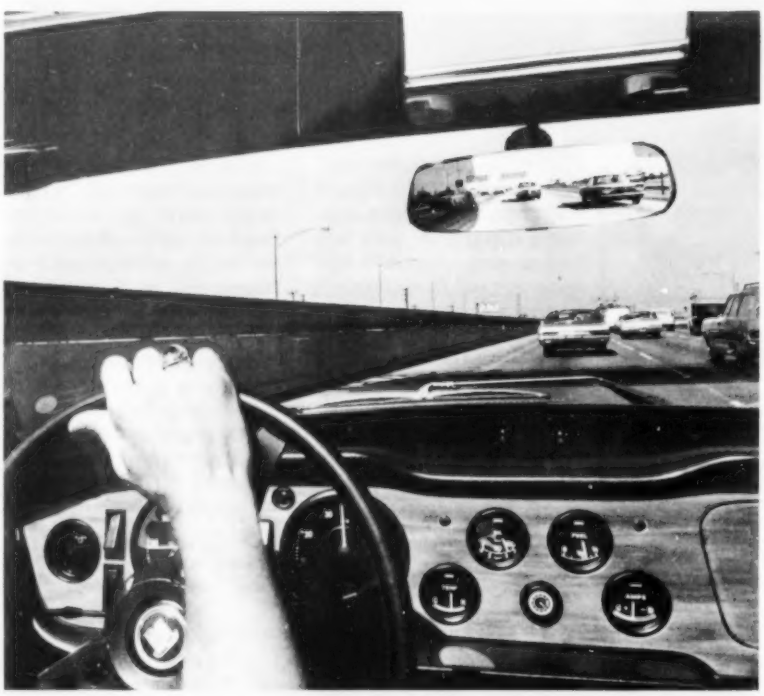
a. Hard brake to slow, grasp the wheel firmly and steer over it.

b. Honk, signal and move right to force car on right to ease right.

c. Hard brake to stop.

d. If you're tired, hop out and stack up a few Zs.

You won't be able to stop by hard braking and you might skid or be plowed into by the car behind you. And don't try to make the car on your right move over. He might do it, but he might not have room. So a. is the choice. If the object in your path were something large and heavy, or if it were a person, the correct action would be different. But in this case, steering over it is the best choice. The mattress won't damage your car or cause you to lose control.



You're in the number one lane of a divided six-lane highway. There are vehicles ahead, behind and to the right of you. Your left front tire blows out. What should you do?

a. Say, "I've been shot! No, seriously, folks . . ."

b. Stay off the brakes and steer firmly to gradual stop in emergency parking zone.

c. Medium brake to stop as quickly as possible.

B is right. When something goes wrong the natural thing is to hit the brakes and slow down as quickly as possible, but in this case that is the worst thing to do. Sudden or hard braking will cause you to lose control. Just lift your foot off the accelerator and steer it off the side of the road. If you have to brake, do it very gently.

You're driving at 50 miles an hour on a two-lane highway. You come to the top of a hill and as you go over the crest you see a line of four or five cars coming up the hill. One car is trying to pass them and is coming right at you. He's only 150 feet ahead of you when you see him. What's the best way to avoid a painful meeting?

a. Stomp on your brakes to stop.

b. Hard brake, release and medium brake, and swerve right.

c. Do a "bootlegger turn" and look for a less popular road.

d. Drive on two wheels to give him some room.

This is not the time for anything fancy. B is the correct answer. You have only 150 feet and you'd need over 200 to stop in time. (Besides which, he's moving *toward* you. You'd each need over 200 feet to stop.) Braking and then swerving right is your best opportunity to escape a collision. And be careful of that telephone pole! The driver coming at you, and the ones he's passing, will do their best to get out of the way, because they don't want a collision any more than you do.

Although in this situation you would have no choice, many times the decision to go off the road is determined by the condition and width of the shoulder. In emergency situations you won't have time to judge the condition of the shoulder before you make your move, so it's a good plan to observe it in advance. It's just one way of providing yourself with an escape route, in case you need it.

continued

continued

You're on a mountain road going only 20 miles an hour. You've been driving through a storm for the past hour but now it is clearing. You've seen the signs warning that you're in a slide area and you continue to see rocks on the road. You watch a few rocks hit the road in front of you and hear some hit the top of your car. Now you're concerned. What should you do?

a. Accelerate to medium speed to get out of the slide area.

b. Accelerate to get out of the slide area as quickly as possible.

c. Pull off the road and hug the mountainside to wait out the storm.

d. Trade in the car for a tank.

A is the wisest choice. You don't know if the whole mountainside will come down on top of you, so you definitely don't want to stop. The desire to get out of there as soon as possible is understandable, but you risk hitting some of the rocks that are already on the road and losing control of your car. Therefore you should keep cool and move out of the area at a moderate speed.

You're driving on a two-lane highway with a car ahead of you and one behind. A fourth car comes from behind passing all three of you. You see that he has cut it too tight and oncoming traffic will force him to crowd all of you. He passes and abruptly cuts in front of the lead car. The car behind you is traveling too close for comfort. What do you do now?

a. Read the bumper sticker of the guy ahead of you before you hit him. If it says "If you can read this, you're too close," he probably won't be nice about it.

b. Hard brake and stay in your lane.

c. Pump brakes as you see the situation, hard brake, ease off to medium brake and steer right off the road.

Try c. Unless you give that car behind you some kind of warning he'll run right into your bumper. If he weren't there, all you'd have to do is hard brake and drop back. By pumping the brakes, you will warn the car behind you that you are about to stop, so he has a chance to slow and drop back. Then you have room to hard brake to reduce your speed and you maintain control to veer off onto the shoulder to avoid rear-ending the guy ahead.

You're on a four-lane divided highway doing 55 mph. You've been fighting wind for several hours but it seems to be letting up. You round a curve and there's a break in the hillside so the full force of the wind hits you and pushes you over into the next lane of traffic. What should you do?

a. Accelerate and steer hard back into your own lane.

b. Soft brake to slow as traffic permits and grip wheel firmly to steer back into your lane.

c. Try to think of something good about becoming a station wagon hubcap.

B is the best action. You want to slow down to increase your steering control. Be sure of what the traffic behind you is doing so you don't get run into from the rear. Also, be sure you have a place to move into.

You're going down a mountain road and approaching a curve. You step on the brake pedal and it goes to the floor without affecting your speed. There's a sharp drop on the left and on the right and a steady decline ahead. You're picking up speed fast. Now what?

a. Downshift to low range, turn off ignition, use parking brake and look for a section of the mountain you can scrape against to stop.

b. Pump the brakes, take the center of the road, grasp wheel firmly and steer it down the mountain.

c. Think how much worse Indiana Jones had it.

If you chose b., you'd be doing nothing to get yourself stopped, and you'd be picking up speed and you'd soon panic. Not good at all. So try a. Downshifting will use the engine and drivetrain to slow you down, the parking brake will help more and the friction from scraping against the mountainside (or even the guardrail) will hopefully complete the job and get you stopped. Your car may not look so pretty, but you will look a lot better than you would if you drove off the side of the mountain. Turning off the ignition will help slow the car. If you have power steering, it will make turning the wheel harder, but you can still steer. Just give it a little more muscle.

making the RIGHT choice

Many of us love animals and would never to anything to hurt them. Unfortunately, there is a time when this compassion could cost us our lives.

It isn't an unusual accident story: A pickup truck is traveling about 50 mph on a rural road when the driver swerves to avoid a gray squirrel. In doing so he loses control and runs off the road to the left. The truck goes sideways into a large oak tree, killing the driver.

Sometimes the swerving driver may avoid hitting the small animal and the accident ends up as a mystery crash. However, more often than not, when control is lost the vehicle will strike and kill the little critter, too.

The truth of the matter is that most drivers aren't accustomed to making sharp maneuvers — at any speed. Thus, in trying to avoid hurting a little, warm, furry friend they lose control of their vehicle and end up damaging it as well as hurting or killing themselves and the animal.

A Cornell University study showed that the average driver is capable of using less than 40 percent of his or her car's capability at slow speeds. At higher speeds the average driver is even more reluctant to use the vehicle's maneuverability — limiting himself to about 25 percent of what's available.

The result is that in most emergency situations most drivers freeze rather than choosing an alternative such as "steering" around the obstacle. Even excessive braking causes loss of control, usually ending with the vehicle hitting the object the driver wanted to avoid.

When trouble looms, don't freeze. Stay with the situation and use the safe maneuverability of your vehicle. In a few seconds before hitting an object, the cool, alert and *skilled* driver still has alternative choices. These choices, if used wisely, can make the difference between a disastrous crash and a less serious one — or even no crash at all.

Here are some last-second choices to keep in mind:

- Dodge to the right, away from oncoming traffic, even if it means leaving the road.
- Drive off the road rather than skid off. Maintain control of the situation as long as possible.
- Choose to hit something that will absorb the energy (a bush, for example) rather than something hard. This may, of course, mean running over the small animal instead of hitting a tree.
- Choose to hit something going your way before you hit something stationary.
- Hit something stationary rather than something coming toward you.
- Hit something stationary with a glancing blow. A sideswipe will dissipate energy and slow you down.
- Never hit anything head-on, even if you must sideswipe another vehicle to avoid a head-on.

Larger animals, such as livestock and deer, present a greater danger because they will damage your vehicle if you do hit them. However, if a collision with a large animal is inevitable, try to reduce your speed as much as possible but don't take extreme evasive action which could cause a more serious accident.

Obviously you should always slow down and be extra observant when driving in farm land and known deer-

crossing areas. Don't focus your attention straight ahead, but scan the roadway and terrain on both sides for any movement.

When an animal is spotted, don't assume that it will stay off the road. Instead, develop the philosophy that it will *always* cross the roadway. Upon seeing an animal standing near the road, reduce your speed and be prepared to stop. A foot positioned above the brake pedal will reduce reaction time if braking is necessary. A blast on the horn will sometimes turn the animal away from the road — but don't count on it.

At night, when almost 75 percent of all deer vs. car accidents happen, keep your speed down to that which allows you to stop in less distance than your headlights' range.

Watch for the glint of reflected light from the animal's eyes. This is often the first movement that can be observed as the animal glances at your approaching lights. Usually this glint can be seen at a greater distance than any other movement of the animal.

Watch the reflective paddle markers along the road. If they are blotted out, there is a good chance there is an animal standing there.

When meeting another vehicle at night, always slow down and be prepared to stop. Animals wait for one car to go by and then dash out behind it not knowing that there is another vehicle coming from the opposite direction.

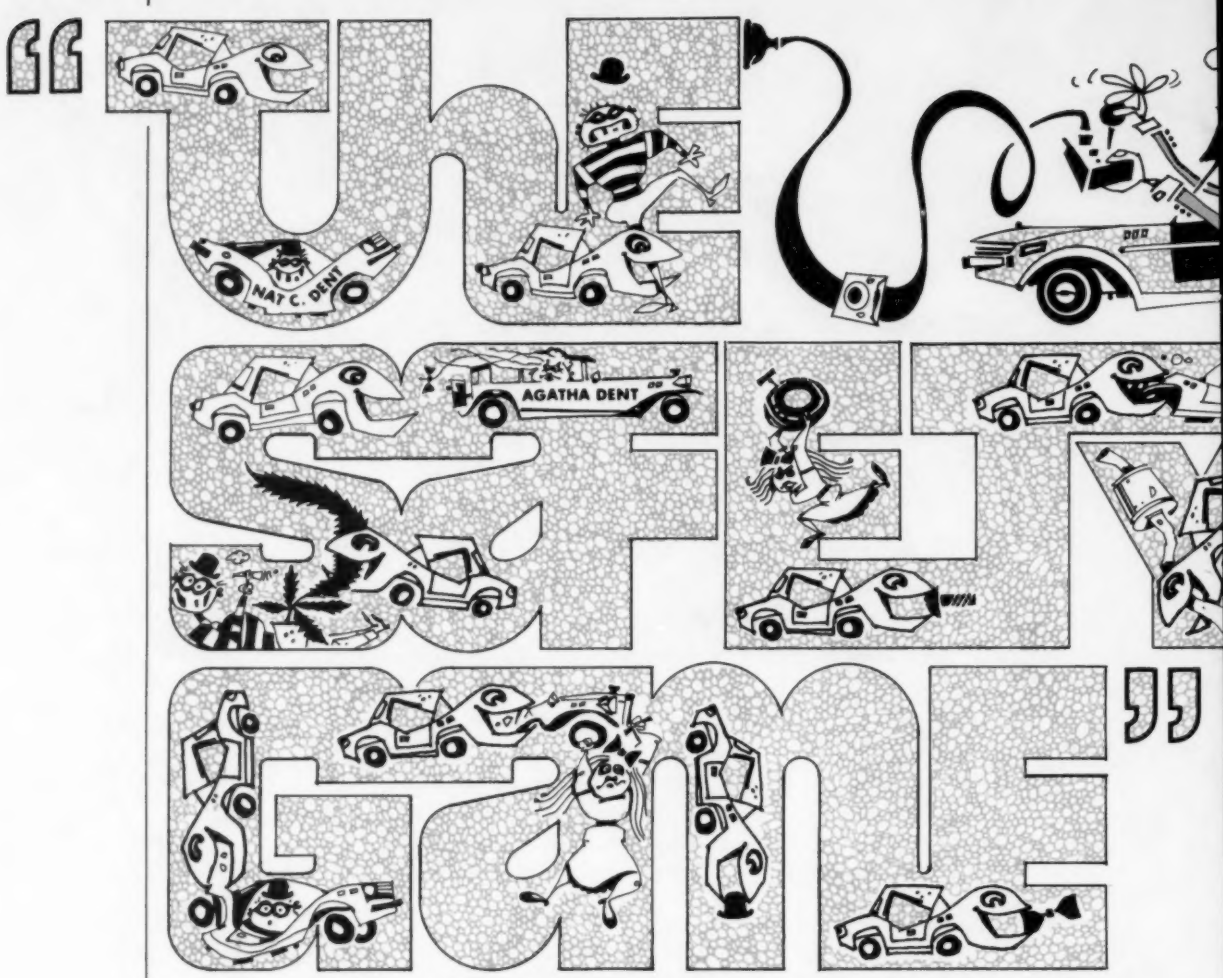
If you're towing a trailer there is the additional problem of animals running into the trailer. They often wait for the tow vehicle to go by and then dash into the side of the trailer. This resembles the pattern where bucks circle around and come in behind hunters tracking them.

While not looking directly into the oncoming headlights, be aware of any movement in front of the other vehicle which could be an animal. Again, always keep your eyes moving. And watch the approaching vehicle for its evasive actions!

Just because most of the animal vs. car accidents happen at night, don't take it for granted that daylight hours are safe. It doesn't take much to conceal wild animals (their coloring is, after all, natural camouflage). They are often difficult to see even if they are standing in plain sight.

Remember, even in the worst situation for both you and the animal, a driver who stays calm and uses the wheel, throttle and maybe the brake wisely can lessen the severity of a crash — or even evade it altogether.

Cul-de-sac Man

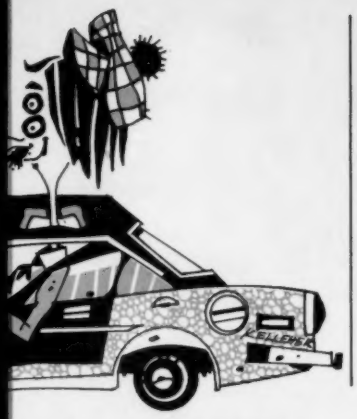


Is wearing a safety belt like a game?

Games are gambles. The roll of the dice or the number on the wheel determines where and how far you move and whether you win or lose. Seatbelts are not a gamble, they are a sure thing. The only gamble is if you *don't* wear them.

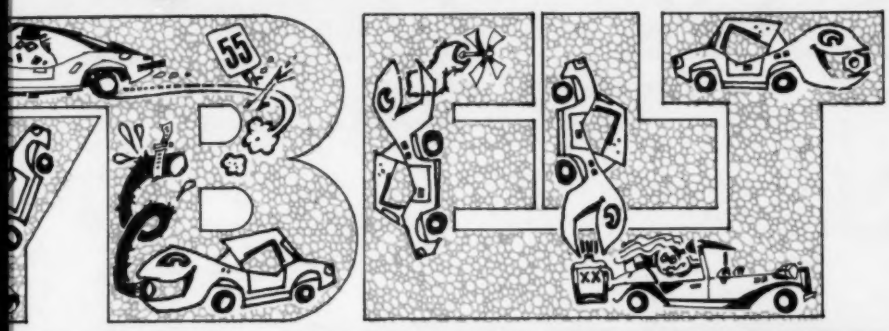
Games require concentration the entire time you are playing if you are to succeed at them. Seatbelts require only the determination to buckle them up. After that, concentration doesn't enter in — the belts do the work.

Games can become obsessions — like slot machines or "Pac-Man." People play them constantly, to the exclusion of more constructive activities. Safety belts are merely a habit, and a good habit at that. They make it possible to do the constructive activities.



Games take up a lot of time; people play them to "kill time." Seatbelts take up very little time. Buckling takes at most three or four seconds, and releasing takes even less. People use belts to make sure *nothing* is killed.

We could go on making these contrasts, but the basic point is this: Games are just for fun and are sometimes frivolous. Safety belts are very serious. The safety belt is no game.



make it Click

THE CAR CROSSED

Being "It" at a railroad crossing usually means you lose. And losing a contest with a train is often very, very final.

There are almost a quarter of a million public railroad-highway grade crossings in the United States. In 1980 there were more than 10,000 collisions at these intersections killing 788 people and injuring 3,662. Of those killed, 708 were in motor vehicles, while 3,534 of the injured were also in cars and trucks.

Such accidents should never happen.

Railroad companies and highway departments across this country have clearly marked public railroad crossings with warning devices. Learn how they are marked and keep an eye out for them.

There are advance warning signs that tell you to look, listen and slow down because you may have to stop.

An "X" painted on the pavement with the letters "RR" tells you that you are approaching a crossing.

Crossbuck signs will be found at most crossings. And if there is more than one track, the sign below the crossbuck indicates the number of tracks.

A few states even require stop signs at all railroad crossings.

Many, many railroad crossings have flashing light signals. Always stop when the lights begin to flash because a train *is* coming. Don't proceed across the tracks until you can do so safely. Should there be more than one set of tracks, be very sure all the tracks are clear and safe to cross

The basic railroad crossing sign is the crossbuck. Here there is a sign to tell you that there are two sets of tracks plus flashing light signals.

Should crossing gates block your normal path, don't attempt to drive around them. Stay in place until the gates are raised — it is against the law to go around such gates.

It is up to you to prevent railroad grade crossing accidents. All you have to do is:

- **Expect a train** on any track at any time.
- **Don't get trapped** on a crossing. Wait on the approach until you're sure you can clear the crossing.
- **Look out** for second trains. When the last car of a train passes don't start up until you are sure no train is coming — in either direction on the same or another track.
- **Never race trains.** You won't get a rematch if you lose.
- **Don't shift gears** on the crossing.
- **When in doubt, stop.** Judging the speed of a train is very difficult.

Oh yes, watch for vehicles that must stop at all railroad crossings. Be prepared to stop when you're following buses or trucks.

Remember it is not only against the law to disregard railroad grade crossing signs, signals and rules, but the penalty for ignoring them could be your last breath.

OVER THE RAILROAD TRACKS

Don't attempt to go around crossing gates when they are down.

Only three months to go — That's an estimate of how much longer Maj Douglas N. O'Hara will have to wear this metal contraption. The brace was fitted when the major's neck was broken in a road accident.

(U.S. Air Force Photo by SSgt John Dasher)

SAVE LIVES

SEAT BELTS

DO

Buckle up and live. That sounds pretty dramatic. Probably some more propaganda from the safety folks. Think so? Let me tell you a true, first-hand story.

In early December, I traveled to London to collect my new 1982 car. The day was cloudy, and except for the occasional rain shower, the trip was uneventful.

I arrived at my home in Fens late in the afternoon. My wife, twin daughters age eight, and son, age five, were excited to see the new car. After a thorough inspection by everyone, it was time to take the twins into Mildenhall village for a gymnastic class. Little brother wanted to come so he could ride in the new car. The kids were also excited because each had their own seat belt in the back seat. We all buckled up and were off.

The night was very dark and the road was still wet from earlier rain. I had not traveled a mile from my house along the Shippea Hill Road before disaster struck.

An articulated lorry (tractor and trailer to us Americans) had pulled out of a drive on my left with the intent to proceed in the opposite direction as I was traveling.

When my left dipping headlights picked up the trailer, I was too close to stop. The unlighted trailer was across both lanes of the highway with no room for me to get around on either side. My car tried to go under the side of the trailer. It didn't make it!

The result was not particularly pleasant. The new car was totally destroyed. I sustained numerous head lacerations, a broken neck, and a slightly fractured skull. The children received some bumps, bruises and scratches from flying glass, but nothing serious.

Can you imagine the results if we hadn't been wearing seat belts? The belts obviously had no effect on the car; it would have been destroyed in either case. But what about me and my family?

Had I not been wearing my belt, I would be a real life demonstration for the current television seat belt advertisement. After passing through the windscreen, my body would have come to an abrupt stop against the trailer somewhere over the hood. Undoubtedly, I would have received fatal injuries. The children would have become human missiles. They would have either followed me through the windscreen or bounced around the inside of the car like ping-pong balls. In either case, they would have received critical or fatal injuries.

Seat belts work. They save lives. Just ask a survivor or his family. They saved mine and my family's.

by Maj DOUGLAS N. O'HARA
RAF Mildenhall, England

make it CLICK

Congratulations! You "Made It Click" for all of us by clicking into the use of occupant restraint systems. If you'll tell us about the crash you survived by filling out the attached form, we'll send you a T-shirt just like you see on this page. (Specify size: small, medium or large.)

TYPE OF RESTRAINT SYSTEM USED

_____Seat Belt (Lap or lap/shoulder)
_____Infant/Child Safety Seat
_____Automatic Seat Belt
_____Automatic Air Cushion (Airbag)

AGE OF SURVIVOR(S)
(Please indicate all survivors)

_____1 day-9 months
_____9 months-4 years
_____4-12 years
_____12-18 years
_____18-30 years
_____30-45 years
_____45-60 years
_____Over 60 years

DATE OF CRASH/ACCIDENT
(must have occurred in 1982)

_____Month
_____Day
_____Year

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CRASH: _____

NUMBER OF PEOPLE, EXCLUDING YOURSELF, IN SAME VEHICLE: _____

VEHICLE MAKE AND MODEL: _____

NAME OF PERSON OR ORGANIZATION TRANSMITTING THIS STORY AND RELATIONSHIP TO SURVIVOR: _____

NAME OF SURVIVOR AND CURRENT ADDRESS:

Send the form to:

HQ AFISC/SEDD
"Make It Click"
Norton AFB, CA 92409

continued from page 4

Residential areas have their own hazards, such as children playing or riding bikes. You are ready to go for the brake if they move into your path.

tion to drive into their lane. And you have looked over your shoulder at your target lane as your last act before starting the lane change, not wanting to rely solely on your mirrors.

In contrast, the poor driver will speed up beyond the speed limit to reach a space in the other lane half a block ahead. Or he'll nose his way into an opening barely large enough for his car. Or he'll slow up a line of cars behind him while he waits for a space in the other lane. The problem? No advance planning. His mind was wondering "what's for dinner" and he suddenly realized he needed to turn.

On and off base: Entering and exiting your base or post is again like a small traffic jam. You know it will happen, and you try to arrive a little earlier or leave a little later to avoid it. If you can't do that, you wait calmly for your turn to go past the guardshack.

The impatient driver is, well, impatient. He thinks the guard is purposely slowing movement through the gate, and he fumes a lot. Of course, he doesn't move any faster than you.

Speed limits: As a good driver, you know that the speed limits are posted for the efficient movement of traffic in the city, and they are meant to allow safe movement of non-motor traffic — pedestrians, animals and bicycles. You keep your car at or below the speed limit and you move your eyes, watching for changing conditions that call for lower speed.

The speeder thinks the limits are put there to cause him trouble and annoyance, and to make him late to his destination. He races through intersections, drives too fast down residential streets, and puts a lot of faith in his brakes.

Mirrors: The fastest and most effective way to know what's happening where you've already been is to consult your car's mirrors. As a safe, wise driver, you look at your mirrors frequently, not just the windshield mirror but also the ones on the doors. You stay alert for any quick movements of other cars that the mirrors may show you. When the time comes for you to move you don't rely totally on those mirrors, but you turn your head and take a direct look, to show you what you couldn't see in your blind spot.

You know the type who doesn't use his mirrors. He's the one who backs into telephone poles, and sideswipes other cars. He changes lanes without concern for anyone who is occupying the spot he's aiming for.

Searching: If you must find a certain address in the city, a store or a residence for instance, you check for the right block on a map (if you aren't familiar with the city). Then you drive to a convenient parking spot near the area and go to the address on foot.

The inconsiderate driver drives slowly up the street, holding up traffic as he looks for the address he wants. When he finds it, he begins looking for a parking place on the street as close as possible to the address, preferably right in front. Others have to wait or go around him.

Restraint: You should congratulate yourself on your wisdom because you use your car's seatbelts regularly, even in town. You buckle them up wherever you go, across town or just around the block, because you know that most accidents happen close to home.

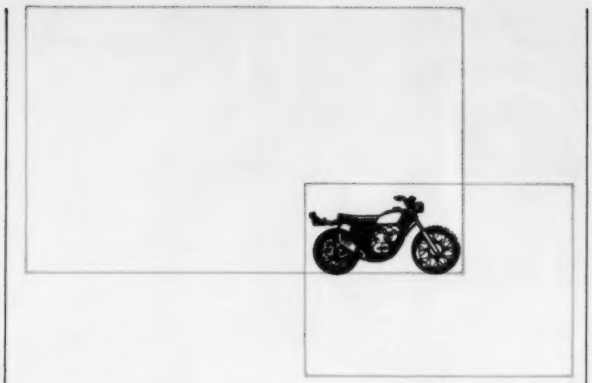
The unwise driver leaves his belts rolled on the take-up reels. If asked to buckle up, he says he uses them on long trips or when he's on the freeway, but he doesn't even then. He thinks they are a bother.

Congratulations! You might say, "But this is only ordinary driving, the stuff we learned in driver's ed in high school. There's nothing very remarkable about it." Perhaps there isn't. But perhaps you should look at all the other drivers you see who can't seem to hold their cars steady, who speed up and then have to jump on the brakes to avoid hitting someone else's bumper, who can't parallel park without rubbing the raised white letters off their radials, who turn without signaling, who tailgate others and then get upset when others do it to them, who do the thousand other things that annoy or endanger those around them.

When you think of them you really can congratulate yourself on being better than average at a task that is complex and demanding. But don't rest and pat yourself on the back (certainly not while driving! Keep both hands on the wheel!).

Continue to think about what you are doing each time you get into your car and get completely absorbed in the task of driving your car. You already plan your moves and execute them smoothly and you do nothing to surprise those around you. You have your experience to get you through the city and to your destination, and your experience is a considerable asset.

So congratulate yourself. You've earned it.



too CLOSE FOR COMFORT

A MATTER OF LUCK?

It was a warm sunshiny Sunday. I was on my way in for weekend duty, although there were a bunch of other things that I would rather have been doing. I was running a little behind schedule, a lot over the speed limit, and not thinking too much about motorcycle safety.

The road I was traveling does have some curves and hills, but I was familiar with them since I use the road regularly. Just after starting into a slight left curve, I crossed one of those rubber hoses that was hooked up to a car counter. Immediately afterwards, the front end of my bike started to wobble. I couldn't regain control or stop in time to avoid going down, so in addition to thinking about how much it was going to hurt, I thought about what I could do to survive.

As I was thrown from the bike, I remember trying to hold on to the throttle twist-grip and feeling it slip from my hand. I apparently landed on top of the bike, because I remember sliding along and looking back at all the sparks the metal frame of the bike was making on the asphalt. My first instinct when I felt myself being thrown off the sliding bike was to land on my feet running. I quickly discarded that plan. Then I remembered an article that I had read in *Cycle World* magazine. It said that you should tuck and roll to minimize injuries, so I tucked and I rolled, and I rolled, and I rolled. When I finally stopped, I verified the fact I was still alive and checked for injuries. I had a scratch on my right elbow, one on my left knee, and a couple of bruises.

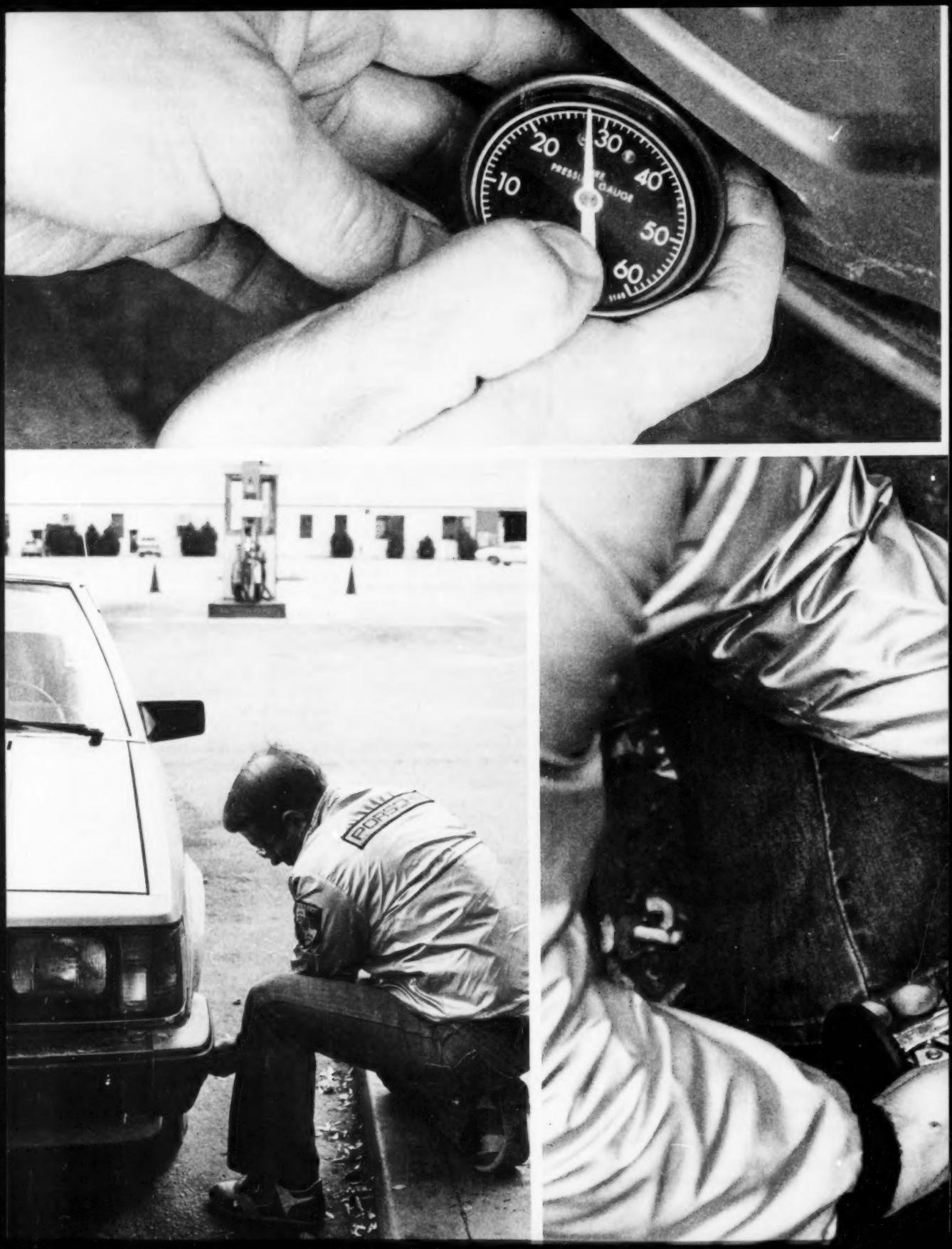
Excessive speed was obviously the primary cause of my accident. In retrospect, however, I can see two other factors that also played a part. My emotional state was one of these since I wasn't all that happy about having weekend duty. The other was an overconfident attitude. I had attended the base motorcycle training course, had been riding for 10 months, and thought I was pretty good. I could handle any situation that might come up.

In addition to a lot of luck, I attribute my survival to the protective gear I was wearing and the article I had read. I was wearing my helmet with full-face shield, leather gloves, thermal underwear, field jacket with liner, and steel-toe boots. I am submitting this account of my accident so that someone else might possibly learn from the mistakes that I made.

Last year we lost 47 of our young Air Force people who weren't so lucky. Read, learn, and survive!

Thanks to the author for sharing his experience!

LELAND K. LUKENS
Brigadier General, USAF
Director of Safety and biker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FORD

are you UP on TIRES?

(top, left)
Check your tire pressures "cold" — when they haven't been driven on for three hours or more. Then make a note of how many pounds must be added to bring them up to the psi you want.

(bottom, left)
When you get to the air pump, check the tire pressure again.

(bottom, right)
Then add air.

You'd better be! Actually, tires are the only things between your car and the ground. If they aren't in the best condition and properly inflated you are headed for trouble — trouble that you may not be able to steer, brake or accelerate out of.

Tires act as the primary bump absorber between your car's wheels and the road. They provide driving traction and steering control. And they must grip the road when you apply the brakes.

Good tire maintenance habits go hand in hand with safety, economy and efficiency. The prime focus of good tire maintenance is inflation.

Correctly inflated tires provide better traction and braking, easier steering, better cornering, extra insurance against blowouts and longer tread life, not to mention more miles from every gallon of gasoline. However, there isn't any single correct inflation pressure.

Proper inflation is that pressure at which there is an even rubber pressure in contact with the road across the tire's contact patch.

The pressure recommendations given in the vehicle owner's manual or on a special placard mounted in the glove compartment or on the door column are for normal driving conditions. Normal driving conditions exclude sustained highway speeds or extra weight in the vehicle. In most cases, the vehicle manufacturers' recommended inflation levels may be a bit low.

An improvement in handling, tread mileage and mpg can usually be achieved by inflating the tires from two to four pounds per square inch (psi) over the normal recommendations. However, never exceed the maximum pressure marked on the tire's sidewall.

Inflating the tires about four psi over the regular pressure for sustained highspeed driving, as recommended in your owner's manual, is also essential for maximizing tire life. This allows the tire to run cooler, decreasing wear and chance of tire failure. Again, be sure not to exceed the maximum inflation level on the sidewall.

continued

If pressures recommended by the vehicle manufacturer are different front to rear, it is a good idea to maintain that differential. For example, if the recommended front/rear pressures are 25/20 and you inflate the front tires to 32 psi, increase the rear pressure to 27 psi maintaining the five psi front-to-rear differential.

Tire pressures are always given as "cold." That is the pressure in the tire after it has been idle for at least three hours. A good time to check

(above)
And adjust the pressure to the desired psi (the pressure measured when you arrived at the pump plus the differential you noted at the "cold" check). Always use your own gauge; those used by every customer or built into pumps are extremely inaccurate.

(right)
Examine tire sidewalls for cracks, cuts or snags deep enough to expose body cords as well as any bump, bulge, knot or separation.

(below)
Check the tread for nails, small stones and bits of metal or glass imbedded in the tread that should be removed. Also check tread depth and wear pattern.

pressures is in the morning before you drive the car. If the check shows, for example, that your tire is six pounds low and you then drive a few miles to an air pump, take another pressure reading (because the tires will now be warm) and then add six psi to that pressure.

While vehicle manufacturers and tire builders may not be able to agree on the proper inflation for your car, there is one thing that they do agree on: never bleed air from a hot tire to bring its inflation down to "cold" specifications. It's not unusual for tire air pressure to increase as much as eight psi after a high-speed run at heavy loads.

What's going on? Tires have two diameters: rolling and free. Free diameter is the diameter of the tire at rest

continued

without a load on it. Rolling diameter is that of the tire under load. The difference between free and rolling diameters is footprint (also called contact area or patch area), which represents tire deflection. And tire defelction is proportional to vehicle load.

Overloading the vehicle, using tires that are too small to support the vehicle's weight, or underinflating the tires increases the deflection to a point where the center of the tread raises off the road. This causes rapid wear of the outer tread edges.

With underinflated tires, steering is difficult and road-holding qualities poor to the point of being unsafe. At best, tread life is considerably reduced. Moreover, the tire walls are subjected to greater stresses, heat is generated and the internal temperature increases; the entire structure of the tire tends to disintegrate, the tread separates from the carcass, the plies separate from one another and the fabric collapses from fatigue.

Cracks also develop on the walls and gradually become real tears, which affect the casing plies and eventually damage the inner walls, causing deflation and irrepairable damage.

Overinflation causes just the opposite wear pattern. That is, deflection is decreased to a point where only the center portion of the tread is in contact with the road. This wears the tread at its center area.

Because the area supporting the weight is greatly reduced with overinflated tires, the road-holding properties are generally poorer and safety is impaired.

The vehicle also bounces over obstacles and the suspension may be adversely affected with the ride becoming far from comfortable. Above all, the tire life decreases because excessive shocks have a particularly damaging effect on the tire carcass. The ply fabric threads are overstressed and more vulnerable to shocks from uneven road surfaces. The risk of ply fracture and burst then becomes very real. Even the tread rubber is over-stressed and, therefore, more vulnerable to laceration.

What do I do? In addition to checking tire pressures at least monthly, regularly inspect the tread and sidewalls. A swift kick is not the best way to test the condition of your tires. A visual inspection is better . . . and it's easier on your feet.

Besides looking for cuts, fabric breaks and other damage, check the pattern of tread wear. Uneven or excessive tread wear is an indication of one, or a combination, of the following: misalignment, out-of-balance tire and wheel assembly, suspension neglect, lack of tire rotation, under or overinflation, "grabby" brakes.

warning!

- **Avoid damaging objects such as chuckholes, rocks, curbs, glass, etc., which may cause internal tire damage. Continued use of a tire that has suffered internal damage (which may not be externally visible) can lead to dangerous tire failure. Determination of suspected internal damage requires dismounting the tire from its rim and examination by a trained tire technician.**

- **Using a wornout tire (a tire with less than 2/32nds-inch of remaining tread depth) increases the probability of tire failure. It is also illegal in 39 states.**

- **Excessive speeds or racing creates heat build-up in a tire, leading to tire failure.**

- **Excessive wheel spinning when freeing a vehicle from sand, mud, snow, gravel or ice can result in explosive tire disintegration or vehicle differential failure. Don't exceed 35 mph as indicated on the speedometer.**

Misalignment can be caused by wornout parts of the steering or suspension systems or when wheels are knocked out of position by hitting a curb or a hole in the road. Normally, a visual inspection alone will not tell you if your wheels need aligning. Have a dealer check front wheels for misalignment if you notice uneven or excessive wear — especially if you see a feathered or scuff pattern of wear on one side of the tread. That alignment service will also reveal any loose or worn-out parts in the steering and suspension systems.

Worn shock absorbers, loose tie rods, a sprung axle and worn wheel bearings can ruin tires and create a safety hazard. Bad shock absorbers may cause a pattern of cupped or spotty wear to develop, the same type of tread wear frequently seen on out-of-balance tires. Other worn parts can cause a variety of erratic wear patterns.

An out-of-balance tire and wheel assembly can reduce tire mileage and be the source of annoying car bounce and vibration that may be felt in the steering wheel. All four wheels should be balanced with the appropriate equipment to get the maximum service from your tires. Usually, wheels require static balancing to prevent car bounce and dynamic balancing to prevent shimmy.

"Grabby" brakes often cause bald spots to develop on tires. If you notice this type of wear, have the brakes examined. They probably need adjusting.

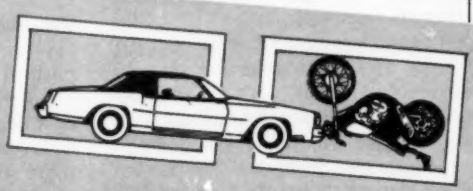
Even slight curb scrapes can be costing you gas mileage, according to Alan L. Browne of General Motors Research Laboratories. Tire sidewall irregularities, such as scuffing or raised lettering, tend to make tires consume more energy in rolling. Because colder tires have a higher rolling resistance, sidewall and wheel factors which conduct heat from the tire tend to cool it down and make it slightly harder to roll.

Ted C. Warholic, of the General Tire & Rubber Company, also reports that rolling resistance is greater for cold tires, and that it can take 30 minutes into a trip before tires warm up to the point where rolling resistance reaches its minimum level.

However, the most important consideration given your tires should be inflation. One in four tires is under infated by four or more pounds. With today's front-wheel-drive vehicles, tire pressures are more critical than ever. Keep up on your tires.

Mail Call

Open Letter to Motorcyclists



I have been an avid motorcycle rider for a number of years now, and am happy to say that I have never had an accident on the road. I primarily ride dual purpose bikes so that I can enjoy both worlds. Although I have bruised my ego and dignity many times while cavorting in the dirt, I have never been put into a situation while on the road that I could not handle. I attribute my success to my "Three Golden Rules of Road Riding."

1. You are invisible. As soon as you swing your leg aboard your cycle, you automatically become invisible. No one can see you.

2. If you were visible you would automatically become a prime target. If other drivers could see you, each and every one would try to kill you.

3. There is no such thing as a fender bender on a motorcycle. If you are going to simultaneously occupy the same space as another vehicle, you are the one who is going to get bent and/or broken. This same axiom applies to other inanimate objects you might encounter.

What all of this boils down to is that you are responsible for every other vehicle on the road you are traveling. Since you are so vulnerable with your whole body flapping in the breeze, the preservation of it in its present form is up to you. You must be completely and totally aware of your surroundings at all times. You must always be looking up, down, and all around, all of the time.

I also have strong feelings on helmet laws. I think they should be repealed. There is no way that any state or federal agency can legislate against stupidity. Those riders who insist on not using helmets must really be into sado/masochism. They inflict severe pain on their loved ones and themselves (if they survive). Riders who don't use such "sissy" precautions as protective clothing or helmets are Mother Nature's way of insuring survival of the fittest specimens of the species. Those lame brain misfits are culled out by the process of collision with foreign objects, usually early in their riding career, thereby preventing them from reproducing more of their kind. Somewhat akin to the dinosaur.

After having covered these three rules, if you are brave enough (or foolish enough) to take on that pack of homicidal maniacs in their armorplated, many-wheeled mayhem machines, then press on brother, and many happy years of joyful and safe motorcycling. But just remember, it is a far, far better thing you do to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous caution and humility than to suffer the pain and anguish of foolish bravado. If you insist on your rights and your space on the road, regardless of that idiot in the many-wheeled monster who is infringing on your turf, PRESS ON BRO. The sooner you are gone, the sooner I don't have to watch out for you too!!!

TSgt DAVID K. YOUNG
Base Operations
Cannon AFB, NM

HEAD RESTRAINTS EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING WHIPLASH INJURIES

Head restraints in passenger cars have significantly reduced the frequency of whiplash injuries in rear impact crashes, according to a report released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

The report, which evaluates the benefits and costs of head restraints in current model passenger cars, is part of a government-wide review of existing major federal regulations.

NHTSA says that head restraints appear to be effective safety devices that eliminate some 65,000 whiplash injuries each year. The evaluation report indicates that head restraints have significantly reduced injuries and that fixed head restraints are more effective and cost less than adjustable head restraints.

Head restraints are designed to help prevent whiplash by limiting the rearward motion of the head in a rear impact crash. The standard (No. 202) has been in effect since 1969. It sets height, width and strength requirements for fixed and adjustable head restraints at the driver's and right front seating positions of passenger cars.

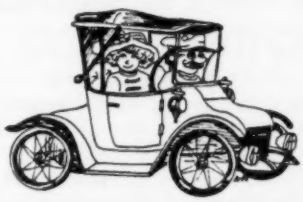
The report includes the following findings:

- Fixed head restraints are nearly twice as effective as adjustable head restraints because 75 percent of adjustable restraints are left in the down position, which does not adequately protect an occupant of average height.
- Fixed head restraints reduce the injury risk to driver and passenger by 17 percent; adjustable restraints reduce the risk by 10 percent.
- Fixed restraints add $12 (in 1981 dollars) to the lifetime cost of owning and operating a car, about one-third as much as adjustable restraints ($40).
- Since 1969, a total of 28 percent of the cars sold have been equipped with fixed head restraints and the remainder, 72 percent, have adjustable restraints.

BACKYARD MECHANIC VOLUMES

Our supply of Volume II of "The Backyard Mechanic" is depleted. The offer of a free copy to military members of the Armed Forces on the back cover of t he March 1982 issue of DRIVER is ended. If you don't receive your requested copy within two weeks of your request, you will not receive it. Workload does not permit answering letters concerning requests.

If you are still interested in obtaining copies of the volumes, you may order them from the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009. The cost per copy for each volume is: Vol I, $4; Vol II, $4.50; Vol III, $4.50.



AUTO "FIRSTS" HISTORY QUIZ

While there is little resemblance between the automobiles of the turn of the century and those manufuctured today, you may be surprised at how long ago many auto innovations were introduced, says the Automotive Informaton Council (AIC).

Check your knowledge with this short auto history quiz:

1. In what year did the steering wheel come into general use?
a) 1902 b) 1903 c) 1905

2. When were four-wheel brakes standard equipment on most cars?
a) 1901 b) 1907 c) 1927

3. In what year was the patent applied for which carried the essential features of the modern gasoline automobile?
a) 1879 b) 1895 c) 1902

4. When was the first motor vehicle race held in which any of the contestants finished?
a) 1895 b) 1897 c) 1905

5. When was the first U.S. production car with an eight-cylinder engine introduced?
a) 1907 b) 1920 c) 1924

6. When was air conditioning first offered as an option?
a) 1920 b) 1939 c) 1951

ANSWERS:

1. a) By 1902 the steering wheel had virtually ousted the tiller or lever steering system.

2. c) In addition to four-wheel brakes, in 1927 cars commonly had air cleaners, gas filters, oil filters, automatic windshield wipers and rear-view mirrors.

3. a) In 1895 the U.S. patent office granted George Baldwin Selden the patent he had applied for in 1879.

4. a) The first race was held in 1895 and was won by J. Frank Duryea. He traveled at an average speed of 71.2 miles per hour over the 55-mile course.

5. a) The Hewitt car company introduced a V-8 limousine in 1907, the first U.S. production touring car with an eight-cylinder engine.

6. b) An air conditioning unit was offered by Packard in 1939.

CARS LASTING LONGER

Cars are staying in service longer than ever before. The average age of autos on the road has risen to more than 6½ years, up from the 5½ of 10 years ago. *Automotive News* said in an editorial: "If the quality of American cars was so bad, how come they are all running around and living long and healthy lives? We think that the U.S.-built car has always had a remarkable degree of reliability and quality in the drivetrain. What we can't figure out is why the highways and freeways of America are not littered with all those old, unreliable U.S.-built cars that everybody knows had rotten quality."

Even so, needed maintenanace and repairs continue to be neglected because of the tightness of money. This is causing many cars to die before life expectancy is reached. Proper maintenance and service can be big savers in the long run.

LETTERS to the EDITOR — BACKfire

A VARIETY OF ATTITUDES

I just read the letter to the editor from SSgt Wesley E. Lively, USAF (January '82) and I couldn't believe that this guy would write a letter like that for publication. First of all I want your readers to know that not all motorcycle riders are like SSgt Lively. His action of kicking a car that split lanes on him is the type of action that puts the "bad mouth" on fellow motorcycle riders. I have been riding motorcycles for 14 years and have taught people to ride in Europe for the last three years. His action was not only unsafe and improper but just plain stupid.

If I spent time "avenging" all the wrongs done to me while riding I wouldn't have time to ride. I can, however, sympathize with SSgt Lively. I feel that all military drivers' orientation courses should emphasize Motorcycle Awareness as a part of their program. Too many excuses of "I didn't see the motorcycle," or "He didn't have to take up the whole lane" pass as justification for accidents between car drivers and motorcycle riders. But until motorcycle awareness programs are mandatory, all motorcycle riders will have to continue to Drive Defensively — Think Safety!!!

Sgt T.C. MacDonald, USA
Ft Devens, MA 01433

I must take exception to a letter from one of your readers. I have just read the January 1982 DRIVER and can't resist the urge to write my response to the letter "Careless Motorcyclist" by SSgt Lively.

DRIVER is one of the best for promoting safety on the streets and highways and I couldn't believe you would ignore some of the comments made by SSgt Lively. His chastisement of an "idiot in a car" is a perfect example of the macho biker image which he and his friends would do well to avoid.

I can understand his anger from the incident, but I'm sure most of your readers would be better advised to control that anger instead of directing a swift kick of retribution toward the offending car. SSgt Lively is very lucky in not getting an equally angry response from the "idiot in the car" and meeting him further down the freeway at 55 mph!

I would not recommend this method of increasing driver awareness for motorcycle riders and I certainly don't think it's funny as depicted by your cartoon at the top of the page. I'm also reasonably sure that it's against the law (at least in most states) to maliciously damage another person's property.

SSgt Lively relieved his anger by his tantrum but what happens to the next motorcycle rider his victim meets on a wide open freeway? I don't even like to think about it and I certainly hope it isn't me or some of my friends.

TSgt Gerald D. Brooks, USAF
Minot AFB, ND 58705

In our January "Backfire" we printed a letter from a motorcyclist who said, "The last guy who passed me in my lane on the freeway has a very large dent in his car that will remind him not to do it again. He got it when he stopped for a traffic light and I caught up to him with a size 11 combat boot." One of the purposes of our letters column is to show the wide variety of attitudes that exists among people sharing the public highways. If we printed letters only from people who agree with us, we'd be giving a false picture of the traffic scene.

HELMETS MAKE SENSE

Congratulations for your fine article about helmets. The extra information fills in the gaps that the Motorcycle Safety Foundation does not give in its student handout. Are there any plans to print the information and pictures as an article by itself? It would be a great addition to the Motorcycle Rider Course (MRC) the Starlifter Motorcycle Club sponsors at McGuire AFB, NJ.

I hope the information presented in the article will make an impression on someone who is not apt to wear a helmet at the present time. It may safe his life! Recently, two airmen were killed because they thought they would not be involved in an accident. Harry Hurt's investigation of 900 accidents in California found that only three percent of the accidents were rear-enders, but that did not help these two. They were riding two-up on a recently purchased new cycle that had 2000+ miles on the odometer. While waiting at a troop crossing behind another vehicle, a car came up behind them at a speed estimated at 40 to 50 mph and failed to see the stopped vehicles. The car hit the cycle in the rear and propelled the riders into the air and they impacted the ground on their head and faces. One died at the scene and the other expired a week later without gaining consciousness. The autopsies determined that the head injuries were a direct cause of death for both riders. They died because, even though they were wearing helmets, they had not fastened the helmet straps. Witnesses said the helmets flew off their heads when the cycle was hit by the car. An egg shell needs protection if it falls to the floor; so does the human head. Helmet law or no helmet law, helmets do make sense. By the way, the accident described above happened in a helmet law state.

Education through articles such as the one in the December 1981 issue of DRIVER helps to show the value and worth of helmets. It is too late to help the example above, but I hope someone else uses his/her common sense.

CMSgt David P. Cushing
McGuire AFB, NJ 08641

DRIVER cannot offer reprints, but military organizations are welcome to reprint locally. Just give us a call so we can be sure the material you are reprinting is still correct. Some things change frequently – such as the state laws about studded tires, for instance. Satisfactory reprints can be made from clean copies of the magazine, but if you want to borrow photos or original art, we'll be happy to send it to you if someone else hasn't beaten you to it.

A CYCLE FANATIC

I am an avid "cycle fanatic." Nothing in the world could rid me of my motorcycle short of death. I have a 1976 Honda CB750F which I purchased when in the states and used as my semi-main source of transportation. I bought it while assigned to Barksdale AFB, LA and practically lived on it. I was at Barksdale only a year after buying the cycle and put around 13,000 miles on it before I left, making trips to Baton Rouge, Dallas/Fort Worth and Arkansas. In 1977 I was assigned to Myrtle Beach, SC where I continued to ride for two more years. During my three years of riding not once did anything other than the tires ever touch the ground. Call me a "Safety Nut" if you will (and I have no scars to prove it), especially when it comes to motorcycles. I love them and they will always have my respect.

I feel that the day a motorcycle is conquered and the respect is lost, that is the day it will kill or injure. I have great pleasure in riding with other cyclists, so long as they ride my way. To me the world is a beautiful frontier and I want to see and enjoy as much as possible, safely and with other riders. I refuse to ride in a side-by-side manner due to the enjoyment I get from seeing what is around me, and I take the whole lane. Therefore, I don't have to worry about what the rider next to me is going to do. In fact, there is normally 100 to 200 feet between the rider in front and also the same behind me. Stunt (dangerous) riding is out of the question for me. To this day I haven't and don't know if I could spin the tire or do a wheelie.

Maybe safety can be carried to the extreme, but I went so far as to install air horns to ensure that I'm well heard when necessary. As far as helmets are concerned, if people aren't intelligent enough to use them on their own then the state laws should govern their common sense and not give them a choice. I don't particularly care for my taxes being used to clean up some hypocrite's mess and stupidity. The reason I say hypocrite is that people are constantly complaining about how cheap and unsafe the automobiles are and then they turn around and complain about some "stupid law" that says they have to wear a helmet. If this isn't hypocrisy, I don't know what is.

In 1979 I was assigned to Howard AFB, Panama, and was unable to ship my motorcycle due to the eight months of rainy season. Rest assured it will be with me at my next assignment, wherever that may be.

SSgt James F. Primm, USAF
APO Miami 34001

SAFE BRAKING

I've been riding a motorcycle for two years in England, summer and winter. I read everything to do with motorcycles, especially magazines, both British and American. I am *tired* of reading those horror stories involving what they term "cages" (i.e., cars, buses and trucks). Most car drivers, etc., are extremely good drivers. We all make slip-ups. If you're driving defensively, you will not magnify it.

I've found out that looking about constantly is way better than using a mirror. I've saved myself too many times by just taking a second look. Riding along at night, it is hard for me to see the tail light of another motorcycle. But by leaving enough braking space, the span of my lights, I've helped myself also at T-junctions by not assuming someone is going to stay still while I go by. Sure, there are some situations where you cannot do a thing about it, but those are very rare compared with the mass of close encounters some motorcyclists experience. I don't have a car. The motorcycle is my sole transport. I'm not a weekend rider shooting my mouth off. I ride in rush-hour traffic, in heavy rain, high winds and iced-up roads that never stop twisting.

I won't fall into the old trap of thinking I know how to ride a motorcycle correctly. I'm always learning and relearning, constantly practicing good riding techniques. An accident is usually two people making mistakes. I will not make that second mistake, which is usually going too fast to brake safely.

Sgt Nicholas Fornario, USAF
APO New York 09127

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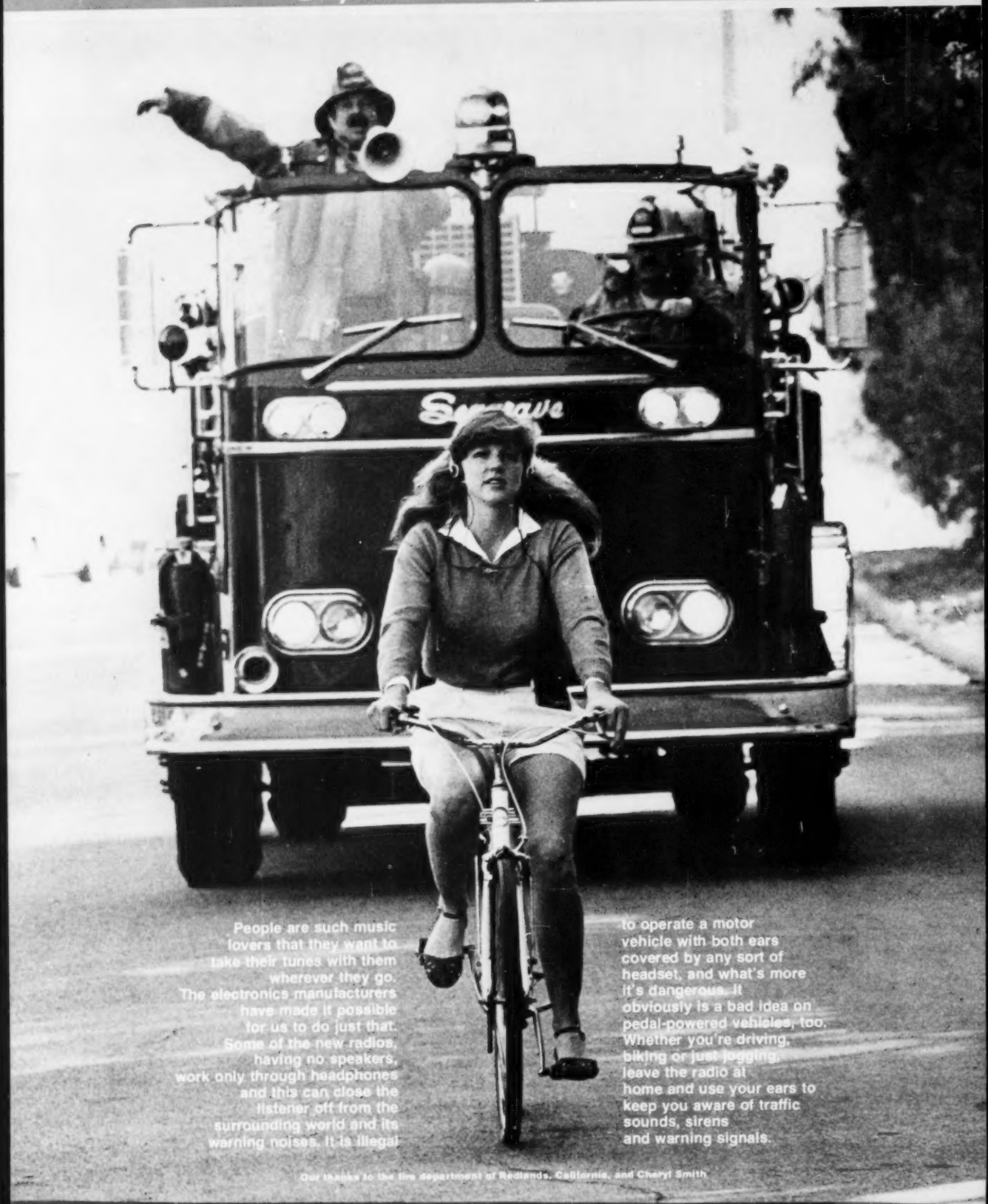
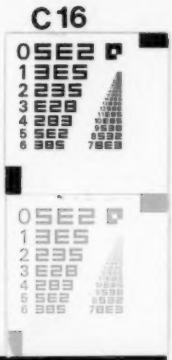
"UH, EXCUSE ME, MISS..."



People are such music lovers that they want to take their tunes with them wherever they go. The electronics manufacturers have made it possible for us to do just that. Some of the new radios, having no speakers, work only through headphones and this can close the listener off from the surrounding world and its warning noises. It is illegal to operate a motor vehicle with both ears covered by any sort of headset, and what's more it's dangerous. It obviously is a bad idea on pedal-powered vehicles, too. Whether you're driving, biking or just jogging, leave the radio at home and use your ears to keep you aware of traffic sounds, sirens and warning signals.

Our thanks to the fire department of Redlands, California, and Cheryl Smith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